

studies, and anthropology, and I look forward to assigning it in my own ethnomusicology courses. As a pioneering foray into the study of post-youth culture, *Music, Style, and Aging* also provocatively points toward possibilities for further research, particularly 1) the still-living generations that forged their musical tastes before the baby boom; 2) the expansion of the research into mainstream commercial pop; 3) the specifically localized investigation of aging global music scenes; and 4) a deeper ethnographic focus on performers. Some of Bennett's interviewees do still play regularly, and offer some of the most striking insights into the fluid meanings of style; one punk musician locates his punkness in his embodied voice, for example (79), rather than the outer trappings of punk, raising important questions about dialectics of not only sartorial style, but of *musical* style, genre and individual identity politics. In short, *Music, Style, and Aging* provides an appealing and substantial introduction to what I hope will prove to be a growing transdisciplinary field of inquiry, and nudge scholarship toward a more holistic view of music across the entire life courses of both communities and individuals. 🍀

REFERENCES

- Bennett, Andy and Richard A. Peterson, eds. 2004. *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Calcutt, Andrew. 1998. *Arrested Development: Pop Culture and the Erosion of Adulthood*. London: Continuum.
- Keith Norman MacDonald's Puirt-à-Beul: The Vocal Dance Music of the Scottish Gaels.** William Lamb. 2012. Isle of Skye, UK: Taigh na Teud.

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Puirt-à-beul is a Scottish Gaelic term that literally means “tunes from the mouth” but which is most commonly translated as “mouth music.” What differentiates puirt-à-beul from other forms of Celtic mouth music is that they consist of fixed rather than improvised texts, and the lyrics are generally formed of “real” words rather than of vocables. They are usually quite short, often consisting of no more than two “turns” of four lines each (AABB binary form, the same as the instrumental tunes with which they are associated) involving considerable textual and melodic repetition. Many of the lyrics are humorous, silly or even nonsensical. Puirt-à-beul link instrumental tunes with song, and music with language. There are some Cape Breton Gaelic speakers who argue that a fiddler cannot play in an “authentic” Cape Breton style without knowing the words (i.e., puirt-à-beul) associated with fiddle tunes, for the lyrics dictate the rhythm. Given that puirt-à-beul are quite quick in tempo compared to most other Gaelic songs, and given also that they are so short and amusing in nature, they are often popular with non-Gaelic speakers, and are regularly incorporated in Gaelic language classes.

This book is a reprint of a historically significant collection originally published in 1901 and revised in 1931. The author of the original book, Keith Norman MacDonald, is well known in

Celtic fiddling circles¹ for his tune books *The Skye Collection* and *The Gesto Collection*. His collection of pùirt-à-beul has been out of print for decades and is very difficult to access, although photocopied versions have been circulating among Scottish Gaelic singers in both Canada and Scotland for some time. Although pùirt-à-beul are often included in collections of Gaelic song, K. N. MacDonald's book is the only collection to consist exclusively of pùirt-à-beul.

In MacDonald's original version, 122 songs are presented in Curwen notation (a form of notation using punctuation to indicate rhythm, and letters to indicate solfa pitches; it was particularly common in the United Kingdom around the turn of the 20th century). Gaelic lyrics are provided without translation. MacDonald offers a few brief notes about most songs, but they are general rather than specific in nature. A brief opening preface introduces pùirt-à-beul but offers mostly romanticized and unsubstantiated claims about their ancient origins.

In Lamb's edition, the Curwen notation is rendered in standard musical notation, and numerous errors have been corrected. Lamb observes that the majority of the tunes in MacDonald's collection were copied directly from his *Gesto* and *Skye* collections, rather than notated from the oral tradition. It is easy to spot and correct errors to these tunes through simple comparison. In other cases, MacDonald employed odd and unwieldy key signatures, assuming, due to a lack of understanding of modality, that the final note of the tune was its tonic. Lamb has corrected these key signatures. Lamb has also provided translations of all the lyrics. Endnotes clarify vocabulary, sources and

other information relevant to the collection. Through these simple modifications, Lamb has created a more user-friendly version of the collection that can be easily used by language learners, instrumentalists and established Gaelic singers alike to learn examples from the pùirt-à-beul genre.

But what really makes Lamb's edition exceptional is the extensive section entitled "Musical Notes and Commentary." For each pùirt-à-beul (singular spelling) in the collection, Lamb has traced the origins of the tune to the best of his abilities, provided concordances to published tune collections, listed digitally accessible archival recordings made by native Gaelic singers and tradition-bearers (see Tobair an Dualchais / Kist o Riches, www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/), summarized any published commentary about the lyrics, provided alternative or additional lyrics, noted any editorial changes made to the transcriptions and commented on Gaelic grammatical and linguistic matters that emerge from the lyrics. These notes are invaluable for anyone interested in tracing the history of instrumental tunes, their relationship with Gaelic song lyrics, and especially if one is interested in not just reading the musical notation but hearing recordings of the pùirt-à-beul in question. Lamb notes that many of the archival recordings made by Gaelic scholars and collectors in the mid-20th century (primarily by staff and faculty in the University of Edinburgh's School of Scottish Studies) are different from those provided by MacDonald, but it is not clear whether these changes are the result of MacDonald's reliance on tune transcriptions rather than oral sources, or whether they are the result of changes that

occurred after MacDonald published his collection. The former seems more likely.

My one disappointment with this otherwise excellent section is that Lamb did not consult the Canadian repository of Gaelic songs, Gael Stream (gaelstream.stfx.ca/). Although most of the field recordings there were made at least twenty years after those held by the School of Scottish Studies, they offer a wonderful opportunity to compare Scottish and new world repertoires.

Will Lamb also offers a very thoroughly and carefully researched introduction to the book in which he not only reviews the significance of MacDonald's original book as well as its shortcomings, but also addresses the definition of *puirt-à-beul*; the scope of the repertoire in the collection (e.g., themes represented; numbers of reels, strathspeys, jigs and other tune types, etc.); origins of *puirt-à-beul*; their function and contexts (especially dancing); and links to other Gaelic song genres. This essay is an excellent, accessible introduction to *puirt-à-beul*; it manages to capture a lot of information in only a few pages. The introductory essay is followed by a brief biography of Keith Norman MacDonald, which will be of interest to anyone familiar with any of MacDonald's publications or musical collections.

It may surprise some to learn that Will Lamb is a linguist rather than a music scholar. However, his interests in the Gaelic language and the oral tradition come together nicely in this volume. Lamb is interested in exploring the possible linguistic roots of Scottish instrumental traditions, and *puirt-à-beul* offer an obvious starting point. Although much of Lamb's early scholarship focuses almost

exclusively on language and linguistics, he has begun producing some very innovative research on the subject of *puirt-à-beul* (see, for example, Lamb 2013).

Ultimately, this book is first and foremost a song collection, but the extensive and excellent scholarly notes and introductory essay make the collection valuable to music scholars as well. This book will appeal to Gaelic language learners, folk singers (although some knowledge of the Gaelic language is necessary to ensure appropriate pronunciation), Celtic instrumentalists, Gaelic and Scottish cultural studies scholars, and ethnomusicologists. It is, in many ways, an excellent example of how scholarship can be made meaningful for a general audience, and how it can be integrated with practical materials designed not just to preserve a musical tradition, but to contribute to its ongoing practice. 🍀

NOTES

1. Although "Celtic" is a contentious term among many fiddlers, I use it as a convenient umbrella term referring to cultures currently or formerly associated with Celtic languages (e.g., those of Scotland, Ireland, Cape Breton, etc.).

REFERENCE

Lamb, William. 2013. Reeling in the Strathspey: The Origins of Scotland's National Music. *Scottish Studies* 36:66-102.